



Age UK Inspiration Pack for local Age UKs and Cultural Sector Partnerships.

The **Age UK Index of Wellbeing in Later Life** showed us that older people feel creative and cultural participation enables them to really *love* later life, but Arts Council England figures show that those aged 65+ are the least likely to actually experience *great* culture. For the last three years I have been exploring why- and more importantly how to change this. There are lots of reasons why individuals choose to take part in creative opportunities and there are many significant barriers that prevent people from getting involved; many of which are explored in the **Age UK Creative and Cultural Activities and Wellbeing in Later Life** that we published in January this year.

So how do we make change happen? I believe that partnership working is the key to delivering long term, sustainable, high quality delivery- and creativity is no different. Local Age UKs work in partnership with hundreds of organisations up and down the country to connect the people they support to a wide range of local opportunities, so why not the cultural sector? As someone who comes from an arts background, it makes perfect sense to me to work in partnership with a specialist organisation if I want to reach new audiences; if you want to connect with children, then you work with schools because their experience and reach is unparalleled and if we want to reach more older people who don't attend arts activities then we need to go to the experts- local Age UKs.

But partnership working is a two way street. In the last three years, I have seen local Age UKs working with leisure centres to provide more physical activities for older people, with volunteer centres to connect with more befrienders and community transport to help get people from A to B. I have seen very few local Age UKs connect with theatres, art galleries, museums, community arts organisations, local choirs or dance companies to generate more opportunities for older people and it strikes me that there is huge untapped potential here if we are going to give the people what they say they really want- more creative and cultural activities in their lives.

Cross sector partnership working is hard and finding the time to make new connections when you don't have much capacity can seem impossible. The arts are often seen as a 'fluffy' option that we focus on when the real work is done, but creativity is what older people say has the most impact on their wellbeing, so why aren't we giving it the attention it deserves? From talking to Age UK colleagues across the country, the answer I often hear is "where do you start?" This is why we have produced the new **Age UK Inspiration Pack for local Age UKs and Cultural Sector Partnerships**.

Cont.

There are many local Age UKs who are delivering some creative activities, many more who would like to, but there is still so much potential to be explored. In this document, we present some models for consideration, ideas for delivery and plenty of resources to support you, so if this is something that you want to develop locally, then take a look. If you would like more support, then join our new **Age UK Creative and Cultural Network**, to get more regular updates and access to new developments. I look forward to hearing from you farrellcurran@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk

